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SUBJECT: IN GUINEA'S FOREST REGION, CITIZENS SUPPORT DADIS  
AND A LONG TRANSITION

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. A recent trip to Guinea's Forest Region, CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara's natal home, suggests that there is significant popular support for the military junta. Forest residents generally viewed the CNDD's activities since the coup in a favorable light. Many of them also felt that a longer transition period is not only prudent, but necessary. While these comments may be viewed as biased coming from a region that stands to benefit from Dadis' rise to power, the fact that they echo comments heard elsewhere lends credibility. Increasingly, many Guineans seem to be in favor of a prolonged military transition. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Embassy officers recently traveled to the Forest Region where they met with youth and civil society leaders in the key population centers of Kissidougou, Gueckedou, and N'Zerekore. The region is home to CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara. The Kissidougou meeting attracted 34 participants of all ages, including local government officials. Only three of the participants were women. In Gueckedou, Embassy officers met with eight men and two women of varied ages. Only two representatives showed up for the meeting in N'Zerekore, one young man and one young woman.

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CNDD INSPIRES HOPE  
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¶3. (SBU) In general, meeting participants across the board were enthusiastic about Dadis and his administration. Citizens in Kissidougou expressed hope for the transition process and praised the CNDD for its efforts to combat corruption. They reported seeing less crime since the coup, which they attributed to a heightened fear of the "consequences." Participants also said that they trust Dadis and believe he will hold elections as promised. However, some of the older citizens were less optimistic. One man stated "even if we gave the CNDD ten years, if Guineans are not ready for change, it won't happen."

¶4. (SBU) The Gueckedou group also noted improvements in the security situation, which they attributed to the CNDD. They commented on reduced incidents of banditry and said that criminals are being more cautious because they are seeing arrests and penalties. One man interjected "even the smokers are hiding now."

¶5. (SBU) The two youth representatives in N'Zerekore also expressed support for Dadis and the CNDD, a sentiment that they said many of their fellow citizens share. They noted the ravaging effects of civil war that still plague their neighbors across the border and said that many people believe only the military can prevent such destruction in Guinea. "Only the army can save the people of Guinea," one said.

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16. (SBU) On the issue of transition, most everyone agreed that a longer transition period is more prudent than a shorter one. In Kissidougou, citizens said they are willing to wait for elections in order to give the CNDD time to "clean house." They said that if donors push too hard for elections too fast, there will be mass confusion and members of the old guard will reclaim power. One person commented "the CNDD cannot do everything in one year."

17. (SBU) Gueckedou citizens described the CNDD's mission as one of "paving the road" for the future. They want the CNDD to address issues such as constitutional reform, corruption, and drug trafficking. They said that if Dadis does not accomplish this objective, people will lose hope and the country will not evolve. However, citizens also did not want to see Dadis in power for 25 years. They said that the CNDD needs to identify its key priorities and leave the rest for a new government. Many felt that the most important issue is to revise the constitution and then move forward with elections. Participants also said that donors should be helping Guinea get back on track.

18. (SBU) Sentiments were much the same in N'Zerekore. Both participants advocated for a longer transition, anticipating elections in 2010. They argued that time is needed to educate Guinea's largely illiterate population, otherwise the elections will fail. With respect to the CNDD, they referred to a need to "sweep" out the problems of past regimes in order to let a fresh government start with a clean slate.

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They estimated that two to three years would be a reasonable timeframe for the transition.

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COMMENT  
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19. (SBU) While it is not necessarily a surprise that Dadis would seem to have significant support in his home region, due to likely expectations of favoritism from a "compatriot," Embassy is hearing more and more that Guineans across the country are generally supportive of the CNDD. Opinions about Dadis seem to be more subject to change, but citizens tend to be in favor of a prolonged military transition. In the interior, most people's exposure to political happenings in Conakry is limited to national television, which routinely broadcasts what is now commonly called "the Dadis show." Contacts have commented that "the Dadis Show" is quite popular because it is not only entertaining, it demonstrates that the Guinean Government is tackling longstanding problems. The recent trip into the Forest Region illustrates some of the general population's increasingly typical reactions to the CNDD. Forest citizens are in no hurry to rush towards elections and believe that a longer transition period is more realistic. There is also a tangible sense of optimism, which is directly linked to the CNDD's rise to power. END COMMENT.  
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